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Atwood, Harry Fuller

The standard form of government

[Chicago]

c1917

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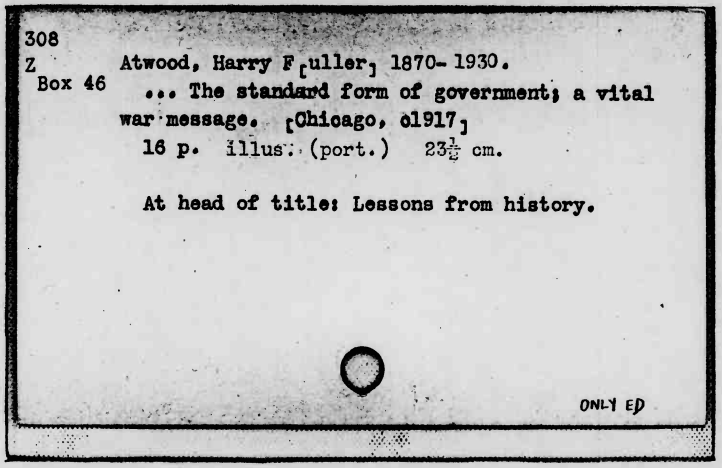
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Gift of the President

Lessons From History

*FAILURES:*

AUTOCRACY
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*SUCCESS:*

REPUBLIC
(The STANDARD Form)

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# *The* STANDARD FORM OF GOVERNMENT

A Vital War Message

By

HON. HARRY F. ATWOOD

# THE STANDARD FORM OF GOVERNMENT

## A VITAL WAR MESSAGE

By HON. HARRY F. ATWOOD

This great war-crisis has aroused the world to serious thought about government and the best form of its administration.

If the people of all nations could be awakened to the tremendous truth that a representative republic is the only form of government that has given permanent, beneficial results, it would compensate in part for the awful sacrifice and carnage of this tragic time.

It is a startling statement, but an indisputable fact that in reviewing the thousands of years of history prior to the founding of the representative republic of the United States, there was no country to which the historian can point and truthfully say: "There was a government that worked well."



### The Standard Form.

From the birth of political speculation, treatises on politics have frequently discussed the question: What is the best form of government? The men who founded this representative republic answered that question by evolving the STANDARD form of government. It is the right STANDARD in the science of government just as the Golden Rule is the right STANDARD in the philosophy of right living; the Ten Commandments in the realm of law; the ten digits in the science of mathematics; the alphabet in the languages; gold in a monetary system; or the corporation in the field of business.

By the processes of reasoning and experience in the various fields of activity and thought, STANDARDS have been evolved to guide mankind in the onward march of civilization.

If one should write a thousand pages on the philosophy of right living and were to inject a single sentence that did not harmonize with the STANDARD established by the Golden Rule, that sentence would strike a false note.

If a legislative assembly anywhere should enact a statute that ran counter to the spirit of the Ten Commandments as the STANDARD, experience would prove that law to be wrong.

Problems in mathematics could not be solved without the digits as the STANDARD of calculation. Language could not be taught without the alphabet as the STANDARD of procedure.

Experience has so thoroughly demonstrated that gold is the right STANDARD of a successful monetary system that it has been almost universally adopted.

In the business world men strove for years to devise a method by which individuals could work efficiently in groups. The corporation was finally evolved as the right STANDARD

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

# THE STANDARD FORM OF GOVERNMENT

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It is interesting to note how closely the business corporation corresponds, in operation, to the representative republic. The corporation provides for a set by by-laws, the selection of an executive and board of directors responsive to the stockholders; and gives to the executive and board of directors in a representative capacity, all power of appointment, of establishing regulations, of appropriating money and of creating the agencies necessary for the conduct of the business.

The representative republic of the United States, which is the STANDARD form of government, is based upon a written constitution setting forth fundamental principles, safe-guards and guarantees, and creates three departments of government, executive, legislative and judicial, with proper checks and balances upon each other; provides for the election of an executive responsive to the popular will; a legislative body responsive to the popular will, and gives to the executive and legislative body in a representative capacity all power of appointment, of legislation, of raising revenues and appropriating expenditures and of creating such agencies as are necessary "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense" and protect the rights of life, liberty and property for the individual citizen.

### Tests That Prove It Standard.

During the thousands of years of history prior to the founding of this representative republic no government had been devised which gave to its people religious freedom, civil liberty, universal suffrage, popular education, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or security of individual property rights.

During the first one hundred years of the existence of this STANDARD form of government all these privileges were secured. In that first century of our history we de-



veloped, in my judgment, a larger galaxy of great statesmen (because they were working and thinking along STANDARD lines) than has been developed by all other governments in the history of mankind. We harmonized into a splendid citizenship, people of many nationalities coming to our shores with varying ambitions and ideals. We stood the strain of the great Civil War and came out of it stronger and better. We made material and commercial progress that has had no parallel in history, and while making that matchless record we established for the United States of America the leading place among the nations of the world.

All these evidences of the adaptability of this representative republic successfully to meet unlooked for emergencies, to harmonize the incoherent elements from other lands, to establish the blessings of liberty, education and property rights, and to successfully solve the problems which had baffled the philisophers and statesmen throughout the ages is proof that the representative republic is not only the best, but the STANDARD form of government.

In his splendid work on "American Political Ideals," John Fiske truly says: "In no other like interval of time * * * has so much work been accomplished of which we can say with truth, it is an eternal possession."

### The Republic.

Of our Constitution, Gladstone said: "It is the most wonderful piece of work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man," and the great William Pitt exclaimed: "It will be the wonder and admiration of all future generations and the model of all future constitutions"; further proof that our Constitution provides for the STANDARD form of government.

In his great and exhaustive work on "Political Science & Constitutional Law," John W. Burgess, after analyzing minutely the

forms of government of the four leading countries, makes the following deductions: "I do not believe it is utopian to predict that the republican form will live after all other forms have perished. * * * It is a hazardous venture to prophesy what the form of the future will be. It seems to me, however, that that form will be a republic. * * * I do not think it chauvinistic to say that the governmental system of the United States seems to me to be many stages in advance of all the rest. * * * It seems to me evident that the destiny of history is clearly pointing to the United States as the great world organ for the modern solution of the problem of government as well as of liberty."

There has been much confusion on the part of those who have discussed the question of government as to the meaning of the words republic and democracy. It would be a good subject for a thesis, as the words have been carelessly and incorrectly used almost synonymously in political literature. The discussion in the Constitutional convention and the statements of Hamilton and Madison in the Federalist makes it absolutely clear that the founders of the Republic had in mind a very marked distinction between these two forms which Madison clearly stated in the Federalist as follows:

"The true distinction between these forms is that in a democracy the people meet and exercise the government in person. In a republic they assemble and administer it by their representative agents. * * * The first question that offers itself is whether the general form and aspect of the government be strictly republican? It is evident that no other form would be reconcilable with the genius of the American People."

Article 4, Section 4, of the Constitution provides "The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a republican form of government." It is inconceivable



that the Fathers would guarantee a republican form of government to every state in the Union without the absolute intent of providing that same form of government for the nation. It would seem that the founders of this Republic after a careful survey of the Governments of history, concluded that Monarchy or Aristocracy resulted in tyranny and Democracy merged into mobocracy and they strove to avoid the dangers of either tyranny or mobocracy by founding a representative republic.

In the last analysis this war is the outgrowth of operating on the wrong basis of government. You cannot conceive of the United States entering into a war with a similar people operating under the STANDARD form of government. Arbitration of all problems is the keynote of a Republic.

**Dangerous Experiments.**

Nicholas Murray Butler, in his remarkable book, "Why Should We Change Our Form of Government," which I regard as the most masterly treatise on Government that has been written during the last decade, says:

"The making of the American Constitution was a stupendous achievement of men who through reading, through reflection, through insight, and through practical experience, had fully grasped the significance of the huge task to which they devoted themselves, and who accomplished that task in a way that has excited the admiration of the civilized world. Those men built a representative republic; they knew the history of other forms of government; they knew what had happened in Greece, in Rome, in Venice and in Florence; they knew what had happened in the making of the modern nations that occupied the continent of Europe. Knowing all this, they deliberately, after the most elaborate debate and discussion, both of principles and details, produced the result with which we are so familiar. * * * The representa-

tive republic erected on the American Continent under the Constitution of the United States is a more advanced, a more just and a wiser form of government than the socialistic and direct democracy which it is now proposed to substitute for it. * * * To put the matter bluntly, there is under way in the United States at the present time a definite and determined movement to change our representative republic into a socialistic democracy. That attempt, carried on by men of conviction, men of sincerity, men of honest purpose, men of patriotism, as they conceive patriotism, is the most impressive political factor in our public life of today. * * * This attempt is making while we are speaking about it. It presents itself in many persuasive and seductive forms. It uses attractive formulas to which men like to give adhesion; but if it is successful, it will bring to an end the form of government that was founded when our Constitution was made and that we and our fathers and our grandfathers have known and gloried in."

Some years ago we began drifting away from the moorings of the Constitution toward the whirl-pools of a socialistic democracy. Demagogues, blind with egomania, and popagandists infected with human hydrophobia, kept up a constant campaign of agitation for the initiative, referendum, recall, boards, commissions, city managers, socialistic doctrines and anarchistic heresies.

Truly we have been passing through an age such as Alexander Hamilton had in mind when he said, "There are seasons in every country when noise and impudence pass current for worth; and in popular communities especially, the clamor of interested and factious men are often mistaken for patriotism."

These fallacies are deserving of some observation as to their results in practice.

A petition for the Initiative containing the names of 15 per cent of the voters of



the State of New York, would be over four miles long.

The referendum assumes that a minority can change at will at a special election the action of the majority at a regular election. On October 10, 1911, in the State of California, by a total vote of less than 60 per cent of the vote cast for President and Governor at a preceding election, the people of that state revolutionized their form of government by passing 23 amendments to their state constitution. All supporters of the referendum should be required at least to read that cumbersome ballot printed in fine type on both sides.

The judicial recall means taking a case from the courtroom where it may be decided in accordance with the law and the evidence, to the street corners where the agitators appeal to passion and prejudice.

Socialism destroys property rights and individual incentive, and has failed governmentally, whenever put to a practical test. Anarchy breeds chaos, ruin and assassination.

In regard to commissions, it is interesting to note that Alexander Hamilton, to whom we owe more than to any other single individual, for this STANDARD FORM OF GOVERNMENT, observed:

"Lately Congress * * * have gone into the measure of appointing Boards, but this, in my opinion, is a bad plan."

Abraham Lincoln, to whom we owe more than to any other single individual, for the PRESERVATION of this republic, said on the last night of his noble life: "I have done with commissions. I think they are contrivances to cheat the government. * * *" Just before Lincoln started for the Ford Theater, on the night of his assassination, Mr. Ashmun, who presided over the Convention of 1860, where Lincoln was nominated for President, called at the White House. He told Mr. Lincoln that he still had the gavel which he had wielded in that

convention, and after a few moment's conversation, he said: "Mr. Lincoln, I am interested in a cotton claim, and I want you to appoint a commission to investigate the matter and report." Lincoln replied, with so much earnestness and warmth that he afterwards apologized to Mr. Ashmun for his abrupt manner: "Ashmun, I have done with Commissions. I think they are contrivances to cheat the government. * * *"

I am glad that Lincoln uttered those words in the very ripeness of his experience, the maturity of his judgment and the very fullness of his wisdom. It was Lincoln's last expression concerning government, and I think by far the most important of all his great utterances. Would that these words might be displayed all over the world in letters of gold by day and with moving electric lights by night as the last solemn warning of the mighty Lincoln against the wholesale appointment of Commissions, which is one of the evil tendencies of the present time.

As people come to know that Lincoln spoke those words and come to understand the full purport of their meaning, the spirit of Lincoln will live on, emancipating the people from a dangerous experiment that is weakening the effectiveness of our government and undermining the efficiency of other governments throughout the world.

In his popular work "The American Commonwealth," Mr. Bryce writes as the opening sentence in chapter 1: "What do you think of our institutions," is the question addressed to the European traveler in the United States by every chance acquaintance. That sentence was written some years ago. Can you imagine an intelligent American of today making, with any degree of pride, the following inquiries of European travelers? What do you think of our Ohio and Oklahoma State Constitutions? What do you think of presenting a ballot to the voter containing the names of



334 candidates, or a ballot over six feet long covered with printed matter upon which a vote is to be cast? What do you think of having 128 boards and commissions in a single state in addtiion to an executive, two legislative bodies and seven other elective officials? What do you think of our more than doubling the expenses of government in nearly every state in the Union during the ten-year period, 1903-1912? What do you think of our spending over $2,000,000 of the taxpayers' money on primaries and elections in Cook County in the single year of 1916, aside from the personal expenses of the horde of candidates? What do you think of our enacting over 62,000 new statutes in this country during the five-year period, 1909-1913, inclusive, and of our having over 65,000 decisions of courts of last resort during those same five years, and compiling 631 large volumes of decisions. These are only a few of the many similar questions that might be asked, because we have been drifting away from the plan of our STANDARD form of government.

It may be urged that our government has not worked perfectly. The answer is, that it is not the fault of our form of government, but in our application of it. It requires only the same masterful application to present-day problems as was given by John Marshall, Daniel Webster and Lincoln to the problems of their day.

We do not live perfectly, but it is not the fault of the Golden Rule. We do not have perfect laws, but it is not the fault of the Ten Commandments. We do not have perfect monetary systems, but it is not the fault of gold. Problems in mathematics are not always worked correctly, but it is not the fault of the digits. Words are misspelt but it is not the fault of the alphabet. Business is far from perfect, but it is not the fault of the corporation idea.

The evils and mistakes from which we suffer today are traceable, not to our form of government, but to its imperfect application. Our remedy lies in exercising more discretion and better judgment in the selection of representatives who are to administer the affairs of government. Every governmental evil from which we suffer today can be traced directly to a misapplication or to a modification of our STANDARD form of government.

### Specific Departures.

Nicholas Murray Butler, in that superlative book, to which previous reference has been made, says:

"We began in this country to break down the safe-guards and to weaken the fundamental principles of representative institutions some years ago, in two different ways. We began to break them down when in many of our state constitutions, indeed in nearly all of them, we departed from the sound principles of constitution-making and filled these important documents full of what really should have been statutory legislation. * * * Then in the second place, we began the destruction of the fundamental principles of representative government in this country when, under the lash of party, we reduced the representative to the position of a mere delegate; when we began, as is now quite commonly the case, to instruct a representative as to what he is to do when elected; when we began to pledge him in advance of his election, that if chosen he will do certain things and oppose others, in other words, when we reduced the representative from the high, splendid and dignified status of a real representative chosen by his constituency to give it his experience, his brains, his conscience, and his best service and made him a mere registering machine for the opinion of the moment, whatever it might happen to be."



I would add that in the third place, we erred in providing for the election of state, county, and city officials other than the executive and members of the legislative body. The fathers never contemplated the election of judges, treasurers, clerks, auditors, sheriffs, assessors, attorney generals, etc. Why should we elect such officers? There is no pledge that candidates for such offices can make which the very name of the office does not take for granted.

### A Standard Adaptation.

The world is looking on with admiration at the working out of the plan evolved by Governor Lowden of Illinois, for consolidating the 128 boards and commissions into 9 executive departments, reducing expenses and increasing the efficiency of the State service. What is it that Governor Lowden has done? Simply adapted the STANDARD form of government to Illinois and he was required to do it imperfectly because of constitutional limitations, which made it impossible to include the other elective offices of the State as appointive cabinet positions. Illinois should follow up this good work by adopting the most brief and concisely comprehensive constitution that was ever written. It should be devoid of all statutory material and should make no provision for any of the fallacies of socialistic democracy. It should abolish all elective state offices other than the executive and legislative and guarantee to every county and city in the state a republican form of government, and abolish all elective officials in county and city aside from the executive and legislative and give to the latter all power of appointment as is provided in; the model of all constitutions; for the Federal Government.

The other 47 states should then follow the example of Illinois.

If we could begin at once to adhere more strictly to the STANDARD form of government in Nation, State, County and City,

our public men would gradually substitute sane constructive thinking and substantial action, for the loose chaotic thinking and ineffective action so prevalent during recent years.

**The Vital Message.**

We should then have a clear, concise, definite and vital message for European countries, which would read about as follows:

WE RECOMMEND OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT. SUBSTITUTE A STABLE REPRESENTATIVE REPUBLIC FOR THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT YOU NOW HAVE.

That message interpreted would mean to England, Dethrone your King. Write a constitution. Provide for the election of an executive responsive to the popular will. Abandon the mercurial plan of changing your cabinet in haste. Guarantee a republican form of government to every minor political division within your realm, and establish a republic of the United States of Great Britain, that would be worthy of your historic past.

To Germany: Dethrone your Kaiser. Abandon Prussian militarism and every vestige of royalty. Write a new constitution. Guarantee a republican form of government to every minor political division within your empire. Establish a republic of the United States of Germany worthy of your mighty people.

To France: Modify your constitution. Provide for the election of an executive responsive to the popular will and conform the republic of your glorious people more nearly to the STANDARD form of government, and guarantee a republican form of government to every minor political division within your republic.

To Russia: Plan quickly. Write a constitution. Accept the STANDARD form of government as your model and establish a republic of the United States of Russia worthy of your great country.



Such a message would be felt in China, Japan, Scandinavia and in all countries throughout the world. It would be a wholesome message for Switzerland and Australia, where recent experiments with the fallacies of socialistic democracy have not proven a success.

**Logical Result of Making the STANDARD Universal**

Let us make the appeal for a world-movement that would result in the adoption and strict application of the STANDARD form of government, the representative republic. Such a movement would pave the way for the realization of Alfred Tennyson's great vision, "The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World."

For years a major portion of the world has been ready for international peace, but no STANDARD plan has been evolved for its successful culmination. One of the serious obstacles has been the difficulty of harmonizing the numerous and varied types of government into a great single purpose.

With each nation organized under the STANDARD form of government and inspired with the determination to bring about international peace, a World-Peace convention assembling the leading thinkers from the various countries could be successfully held.

To my mind, the history of the world readily divides itself into three great periods. The first period precedes the birth of Christ, which was the most important event in all the annals of time. It marked the ending of the old-time and the beginning of the new and instituted the teachings of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of GOD.

The second period extends from the birth of Christ to the founding of this STANDARD form of government, which made

possible the privileges of religious freedom, civil liberty, security of individual property rights, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, universal franchise and popular education.

The founding of our republic marks the beginning of this, the third great period, which has surpassed the dreams of the fathers in material and human progress.

The third great event and the beginning of the fourth great period will occur when the teachings of the lowly Nazarene and the principles underlying this STANDARD form of government shall have sunken deep enough into the mind and heart of the people that the nations of the earth shall assemble in convention and through their representatives frame a world constiution that will declare in no uncertain terms that war is contrary to the teachings of Christ, contrary to the Divine instinct of mankind and henceforth shall be contrary to human and international law, and which shall provide for the selection of a world peace executive and a legislative body chosen by the various countries and give to the executive and legislative body in a representative capacity all power to create such agencies as are imperative to establish and maintain International Peace. The opportunity is here. Shall we rise equal to the opportunity?

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